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SUMMARY

Agenda Item: H.1

Madagascar

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN MADAGASCAR

By The General Planning Commission

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN MADAGASCAR

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Severely broken up as it is, lacking main natural lines of communication as it does, and having a sparse, widely-scattered population, Madagascar represents a large number of micro-regions, the potential of which differs extremely widely.

Thus, certainly more so than in most other countries, development policy must not be too centralistic : even though its broad lines must obviously be national, it must be carried out within a properly chosen regional framework, in order to facilitate adaptation to local and geographical features, and the better to overcome the social and economic obstacles raised by the natural separation of the population.

As this separation is in particular reflected in the lack of infrastructure (roads, training facilities, trading institutions etc.), the spread of technical progress and trade has been insignificant.

The choice of a regional framework will enable the best possible advantage to be taken of the complementary nature of various economic activities, make them more coherent and facilitate the spread of progress through real human contacts between the regional authorities and the people.

In these circumstances, ever since it began its work the Commissariat General du Plan (General Planning Commission) has been trying to define the principles of a methodical regional development policy, capable in particular of providing the foundations for a planning policy for the country as a whole.

Regional studies

In the initial phase, it was a matter of assessing the possibilities of development by "homogeneous" zone, the latter being defined by the rather primitive criteria of topography and natural factors, including climatic and physiographical conditions, followed by the delimitation of development zones within which promising areas were to be located that could be given priority in the development campaign, the best use being made of "polarizing" tendencies.

Such delimitation is very important, because, as development is becoming the prime essential for under-developed countries with rapidly increasing populations, the development zone itself must become the basic territorial unit for all State initiative and activities - administrative, economic, financial, judicial, social and so on. The development zone must also provide the basis for the planning policy for the country as a whole.

This first phase of regional studies has now been completed, and has resulted in particular in the drawing up of prognoses by large homogeneous zone and to the division of Madagascar into 18 "development zones".

Parallel to the first stage of regional studies, the following other work has been carried out : the Ministries of Agriculture, of National Economy and of Planning have drawn up "national assumptions" for agricultural production targets; and "technical assumptions" have been worked out for each development zone, full use being made in the process of the experience and ability of the most knowledgeable experts for each zone. Consolidation of these technical assumptions and their comparison with the national data have made it possible both to readjust the latter (or the regional assumptions) and to break down production targets on a regional scale.

Thus all the basic data has now been assembled to enable a start to be made on the second phase, that of integrated regional programming within the national framework.

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